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ABSTRACT

In order to determine the extent of attrition at Essex County College, all students registered for the fall semester of 1975 who did not return for the winter semester were identified and were surveyed by mail (n=2,000) to ascertain their reasons for not returning. A total of 546 questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 27.3%. Analysis of the resultant data showed: (1) the overall attrition rate was 33.4%; (2) new students who did not return most often cited family problems, disappointment with program of study, financial reasons and illness, in that order, as reasons for non-return, while continuing students most often cited illness, financial problems, family problems, and disappointment with program of study, in that order, as reasons for their non-return; and (3) overall, no single reason such as academic difficulty could be isolated as a cause of attrition. Additional data analyses were performed examining the non-returning students according to their educational objectives, curriculum, academic status, future educational plans, number of credits attempted, level of education completed, and several attitudinal variables. Grade point averages of new students were analyzed against scores on the Comparative Guidance and Placement Test. Overall, the findings indicated a greater tendency for younger students in general and black students in particular to become attrition statistics after the first year of college. (JDS)

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STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH

ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE

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STUDY of ATTRITION:

Non - Returning Students

For 1975 - 1976

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JC 770 200

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BACKGROUND

More often than not, attrition research has consisted of computing and reporting dropout rates by year for student populations broken down by periods of attendance and curriculum. Another limit of some attrition research is a failure to delineate the multiple characteristics of dropping out. By focusing primarily on the comparative proportions of persisters and dropouts, such research seems to imply that there are two distinct homogenous groups separated from each other in a unidimensional space; that is, the two groups differ on a variable or variables belonging to a single domain.

With the exception of studies by Spady (1970, 1971), Rootman (1972), Pandey (1972) and Maudal, Butcher and Mauger (1974), most studies of attrition have been limited to descriptive statements of how various individual and/or institutional characteristics relate to dropout behavior. It is not uncommon to find, for instance, attrition research that fails to distinguish dropouts resulting from academic failure from that which is the outcome of voluntary withdrawals. Nor is it uncommon to find permanent dropouts placed together

with persons whose leaving may be temporary in nature or may lead to transfer to other institutions of higher education (Tinto, 1975).

Ability, however, measured, is but one of a number of individual characteristics found to be associated with college persistence. For instance, significant personality and attitudinal differences have been noted between college persisters and dropouts (Maudal, et al, 1974; Knoell, 1966; Astin, 1964). Vaughn (1968) suggested that dropouts tend to be more impulsive than persisters, lacking in any deep emotional commitment to education and unable to profit as much from their past experiences. Socioeconomic status (Barger and Hall, 1965); family background (Astin, 1975); race (Pandey, 1972, Selby, 1973) have all contributed to a better understanding of attrition.

Whether measured in terms of educational plans, educational expectations or career expectations, the higher the level of plans, the more likely is the individual to remain in college (Bucklin and Bucklin, 1970; Krebs, 1971; White, 1971). Since it is also clear that the characteristics of the high school, such as its facilities and academic staff, are important factors in the individual's achievement, it follows that they would also affect the individual's performance and, therefore, persistence in college.

On the other hand, the ambiguities of predictive research on minority college students are evidenced throughout the literature. Data concerning the predictive value of verbal aptitude tests and other

scholastic measures, such as the well-known Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), allow alternative interpretations. For example, while a 1966 study of SAT scores in three integrated colleges indicated that grades obtained by black students were not underestimated when verbal or mathematical scores were used as predictors, Clark and Plotkin (1963) report that, notwithstanding the lower median scores obtained by blacks as compared to whites, proportionately more blacks than whites who do pursue college actually complete degrees.

Green and Farquhar (1965) reported positive correlations between verbal scores on the School and College Ability Test for black and white females, for white males, but not for black males. The Comparative Guidance and Placement Test Battery, as used in this study, would appear to be a fairly useful test for placement as it was designed for, but there have been no attempts to use the instrument for predictive purposes.

Even if such tests were more reliable predictors, the fact remains that strictly cognitive factors do not account for the major portion of variance in academic performance. Studies of motivational variables, on the other hand, either independently or in conjunction with cognitive factors, have left a good deal of unexplained variance (Trachtman, 1975).

Researchers, in a study of successful and unsuccessful college students, suggested that strategies may be more fundamental determinants

of academic success than are abilities. If they are correct, it would appear that attrition research could be enhanced by considering the strategies students use in pursuing a college education rather than continuing to rely on ability measures already known to be inadequate.

Intellectual development, when considered as being an important part of the student's personality development and as a reflection of that student's ability to negotiate the academic system, has also been found to be related to persistence. Some researchers have suggested that it is not simply the absence or presence of intellectual development that is important in persistence but the degree of congruence between the intellectual development of the individual student and the prevailing intellectual climate of the institution.

There is evidence which suggests that the student's perception of the social climate of the institution relates to persistence. In the context of college persistence, the social system consists not only of other students but also faculty and administrative personnel. Given the faculty's more intimate and direct association with the academic system, it is not surprising that a number of studies have found that social interaction with the college's faculty is related to persistence (Gekoski and Schwartz, 1961, Vreeland and Bidwell, 1966; Gamson, 1966; Spady, 1971; Centra and Rock, 1971).

Since whether a student becomes a dropout or persists is the outcome of a multidimensional process involving the interaction between

the individual and the institution, it is understandable that the characteristics of the institution have also been shown to relate to persistence. By characteristics is meant its resources, facilities, structural arrangements, composition of its members and the medium chosen to express its educational philosophy. Analysis of the effect of these institutional characteristics on persistence, however, has not been as extensive as that relating to individual characteristics.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of non-return to the college for the population officially enrolled during the fall semester of 1975. A secondary concern was to use four scales of the Comparative Guidance and Placement Test to develop a model that could be used for predicting new student success.

METHOD

Subjects All students registered for the fall semester of 1975 who did not return for the winter semester were identified by the Computer Center. That population consisted of approximately 2,850 students both first time registered and returning. Eight hundred fifty-nine students at the extension centers were eliminated because they had not registered for the winter semester when the computer request was made. The total number surveyed, therefore, was approximately 2,000.

The Instrument The Student Interview Questionnaire (SIQ) is a 46 item inventory developed by the author. Seven additional items were added for the purpose of this study to complement the analysis of attrition. That list consisted of: county of residence, curriculum, grade point average; CGP scores for Reading, Sentences, Mathematics and Academic Motivation.

Definitions Attrition (used synonymously with non-return) refers to any student officially registered for the fall semester who did not register for the winter semester excluding official withdrawals and those students identified as not returning because they transferred to another institution, completed objective or who graduated from the college at the end of the fall semester.

PROCEDURE

Mailing The Computer Center printed four sets of mailing labels for the 2,000 students to be surveyed. There were two mailings: (1) the first was during the week of February 9, 1976; and (2) a follow-up mailing during the week of March 15, 1976 to the 1,850 who did not respond to the initial mailing. At both mailings, one label was attached to the questionnaire itself in order to identify students who responded to the previous mailing to avoid duplication, and each mailing included a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the students' convenience.

Survey Responses Each returned questionnaire was checked against

a master printout containing student name, social security number, address and classification in order to verify whether the student was new or returning. One hundred usable questionnaires were received from the first mailing and 446 were received from the second for a total of 546 or 27.3%. Of that total, 140 were new; 406 were returning. Ten were eliminated and 90 were returned unopened.

ANALYSIS

During the month of April, all questionnaires were coded by response and transferred to keypunch advice for processing. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to calculate frequency distributions for descriptive data. Reading, Sentences, Mathematics and Academic Motivation scores of the Comparative Guidance and Placement Test (CGP) were used in a stepwise multiple regression analysis for new students with grade point average as the dependent variable. This statistic was selected to answer the substantive question: which test item correlated highest with grade point average. Institutional and attitudinal responses were crosstabulated controlling for sex.

The attrition rate was determined by comparing the number of non-returning students with the total enrollment after controlling for the following: (1) age, no students over 50 were included; (2) objective in attending ECC, students taking a course for enrichment were not

included; and (3) graduates.

RESULTS

The overall attrition rate for the college was 33.4%, a decrease of 7% from the previous year. For the survey itself, the responses were analyzed by new and returning students. The results for the two groups are different as Table 1 shows. The major reasons for not returning to the college given by the new students were family problems (10.7%), disappointed with program of study (8.6%), financial (7.9%) and illness (7.1%). For the returning students, the highest percentages were illness (14.9%), financial (13.4%), family problems (11.4%) and disappointed with program of study (8.6%). Thirty-three point six percent of the new and 19.4% of the returning students did not respond to the question.

These findings tend to support the literature which indicates that there is no single cause that can be attributed to attrition: the reasons for not returning to college are different for every institution. There does appear to be a greater tendency for younger students in general and black students in particular to become attrition statistics after the first year of college. For Essex, there is a pattern developed over a three year period that is worth noting. Specifically, students who withdraw from the college usually give either family problems or illness as the reason. Non-returning students tend to follow that general pattern also.

TABLE 1

REASON FOR NOT RETURNING

Category	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
Did not leave the college*	19	13.6	46	11.6
Illness	10	7.1	59	14.9
Disappointed with program of study	12	8.6	34	8.6
Family problems	15	10.7	45	11.4
Lost interest in school	3	2.1	6	1.5
To attend another college	7	5.0	16	4.0
For employment	4	2.9	8	2.0
Courses too difficult	2	1.4	4	1.0
Completed objective	5	3.6	16	4.0
Graduated*	1	.7	25	6.3
Dismissed	1	.7	5	1.3
Change of residence	3	2.1	2	.5
Financial	11	7.9	53	13.4
No response	47	33.6	77	19.4
TOTAL	140		396	

*These categories not included in calculation of attrition rate.

Table 2 shows that 30.7% of the new students and 43.7% of the returning came to the college to earn the associate degree. Both groups were almost identical for the objective "earn credits to transfer" (14%). Enrichment was slightly different for new and returning (13.6% and 10.9% respectively). The last two categories were about what was expected. New students enrolled to prepare for a job to a greater degree (22.1%) than returning students (17.4%). Fourteen point three percent of the new and 9.1% of the returning students attended Essex for job related reasons. Only four students indicated no specific objective and 19 did not respond.

TABLE 2

OBJECTIVE IN ATTENDING ECC

	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
To earn associate degree	43	30.7	173	43.7
Earn credits to transfer	20	14.3	59	14.9
Enrichment	19	13.6	43	10.9
Prepare for a job	31	22.1	69	17.4
Upgrading on job	20	14.3	36	9.1
No specific objective	1	.7	3	.5
No response	6	4.3	13	3.3
TOTAL	140		396	

An analysis of attrition by major revealed that 75.4% of the new and 50.3% of the returning students were enrolled in majors under the Guided Studies curriculum. This finding is somewhat unusual since

a recent report by the New Jersey Department of Higher Education showed that two-year college students have taken a more practical approach toward higher education by choosing majors in the occupations area. It is unusual because one would expect a student with a pragmatic approach to a college education to be more likely to persist than is the case here.

The remaining major areas are relatively evenly distributed with the highest percentages represented by transfer programs and the lowest in certificate programs. See Table 3.

TABLE 3

NON-RETURN BY CURRICULUM

Curriculum	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
Transfer program	12	8.6	76	19.2
Special students	2	1.4	10	2.5
Career programs	19	13.6	104	26.3
Certificate programs	2	1.4	2	.5
Guided studies	105	75.4	199	50.3
No response	-	-	5	1.3
TOTAL	140		396	

Table 4 illustrates the difficulty of assigning a single cause to attrition. It is still generally assumed that most students who become attrition statistics are the less able ones, particularly those in academic difficulty. For this study, 19.3% of the new and 17.2% of the returning students indicated that they were performing at the "A"

level; and, 28.6% of the new but 36.4% of the returning students indicated that they were "B" students. For the "C" student, the percentages were 18.6% new and 22% returning. Only 6.4% new, 4.3% returning indicated that they were performing at the "D" level. In terms of actual difficulty, only 5% of the new and 10.4% of the returning students reported that they were on probation.

Given the limitation of self reports in general and Table 1 in particular, one might be tempted to ask the question: What specifically is causing students who are not failing academically to drop out? If the reasons given on this questionnaire for not returning to the college are representative, what can the institution itself do to either reduce attrition considerably or help students cope with their difficulties while still attending classes? Finally, to what extent are forces outside of the college responsible for students, particularly academically successful students, becoming attrition statistics?

TABLE 4

ACADEMIC STATUS AT ECC

	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
On probation	7	5.0	41	10.4
Could not attend classes	-	-	3	.8
An "A" student	27	19.6	68	17.2
"B" student	40	28.6	144	36.2
"C" student	26	18.6	87	22.0
"D" student	9	6.4	17	4.3
No response	31	22.1	36	9.1
TOTAL	140		396	

Forty-nine point seven percent of the new and 39.3% of the returning students expected to return next semester while 5% of the new and 9.3% of the returning students expected to return next year. Seven point nine percent and 16.9% respectively planned to return sometime in the future. Only 8.6% of the new and 12.1% of the returning students expected to complete the degree at another college whereas 2.9% and .3% respectively indicated that they were not interested in further college. The remaining categories - Other and No response - were 9.3% new, 4.3% returning; 5.7% new, 3.8% returning in that order. See Table 5.

TABLE 5

PLANS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
Return next semester	67	47.9	158	39.9
Return next year	7	5.0	37	9.3
Return sometime in the future	11	7.9	67	16.9
Complete degree at another college	12	8.6	48	12.1
Not interested in further college	4	2.9	1	.3
Other	13	9.3	17	4.3
No response	8	5.7	15	3.8
TOTAL			396	

Level of education completed was almost identical for both groups for high school graduate and non-high school graduates with 67.9% new,

67.2% returning and 13.6% new, 12.1% returning respectively. There was a difference in the percentage of GED holders by group. Nine point three percent of the new, but 14.6% of the returning students indicated that level of education upon entering the college. No response was about the same for both: 8.3% for the new students; 5.8% for the returning students. See Table 6.

TABLE 6

LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED

Level	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
High school graduate	95	67.9	266	67.2
Non-high school graduate	19	13.6	48	12.1
GED	13	9.3	58	14.6
No response	13	8.3	23	5.8
TOTAL	140		396	

Table 7 shows a pattern similar to Table 6. Fifteen percent of the new and 15.7% of the returning students attempted three credits for the fall semester. For the six and nine credits categories, the percentages were 13.6%, 12.1% and 7.9% respectively. Students attending the college full-time showed differences by group. Seventeen point one percent of the new and 20.7% of the returning students registered for 10-12 credits; 15.7%, 8.1% attempted 13-16 credits; 5.7%, 10.4% carried 17 and above credits and approximately the same proportion gave no

response 25% and 26.3% respectively.

TABLE 7

NUMBER OF CREDITS ATTEMPTED

	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
Three credits	21	15.0	62	15.7
Six credits	19	13.6	48	12.1
Nine credits	11	7.9	27	6.8
10-12 credits	24	17.1	82	20.7
13-16 credits	22	15.7	32	8.1
17-above	8	5.7	41	10.4
No response	35	25.0	104	26.3
TOTAL	140		396	

Table 8 indicates that approximately 50% of the students for both groups that did not return were between the ages of 17 and 28. Twelve point nine percent of the new and 18.7% of the returning students were between 29 and 34; 13.6% and 11.1% respectively were between 35 and 40; 5.7% and 6.8% respectively were between 41 and 46; and, 10.7% and 13.4% respectively were 47 years of age and above.

TABLE 8

NON-RETURNING STUDENTS BY AGE

	New		Returning	
Range	No.	%	No.	%
17-22	48	34.3	104	26.3
23-28	32	22.9	94	23.7
29-34	18	12.9	74	18.7
35-40	19	13.6	44	11.1
41-46	8	5.7	27	6.8
47-above	15	10.7	53	13.4
TOTAL	140		396	

The two groups responded almost identically to the question "Were you encouraged to use counseling?" The only noticeable difference was the number of no responses. Table 9 shows the results.

TABLE 9

WERE YOU ENCOURAGED TO USE COUNSELING

	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	27	19.3	82	20.7
No	94	67.1	239	60.4
Not a factor	2	1.4	10	2.6
No response	17	12.1	65	16.4
TOTAL	140		396	

Table 10 shows the results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis and indicates the amount of variance explained as each variable was added to the equation. The R^2 values for Rdg. .38; Sent. .39; Motvat. .395; and Mth D. .40 indicate that approximately 40% of the variance was accounted for by the placement test scores. The Anova test - included in the regression procedure - showed no significance as well. At least two possibilities are suggested: (1) attrition students do not score appreciably different on the CGP than students who persist; and (2) the CGP scales themselves have questionable discriminatory power when used as predictors with grade point average.

TABLE 10

STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF CGP SCORES WITH GRADE POINT AVERAGE FOR NEW NON-RETURNING STUDENTS

Variable	N	R	R^2	BETA
Reading	108	.615	.378	0.540
Sentences	108	.624	.390	0.170
Academic Motivation	108	.628	.395	-0.087
Mathematics	108	.632	.400	-0.076

The attitudinal responses covered in items 11-18 of Table 11 are not very different for the two groups; students tended to register similar responses for the eight questions. There was a noticeable difference between new and returning males, however, as shown by the following: almost three times as many returning males indicated that they were very satisfied with their "level of motivation" than first term males, but the females were about even on the question; returning males and first term males registered a similar pattern for both "level of persistence" and "level of awareness." Males were about even for "level of scholarship"; and, approximately twice as many returning males were very satisfied with their "ability to use time wisely."

TABLES 11-18

ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDINAL VARIABLES

FOR NON-RETURNING STUDENTS

(Male)

(11a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of motivation?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	4	9.8%	1	0.9%
Dissatisfied	3	7.3%	21	18.1%
Satisfied	19	46.3%	50	43.1%
Very satisfied	5	12.2%	35	30.2%
No basis for opinion	10	24.4%	9	7.8%
	41		116	

(12a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of persistence?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	3	7.3%	2	1.7%
Dissatisfied	4	9.8%	23	19.8%
Satisfied	21	51.2%	53	45.7%
Very satisfied	3	7.3%	26	22.4%
No basis for opinion	10	24.4%	12	10.4%
	41		116	

(Female)

(11b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of motivation?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	-	-	7	2.9%
Dissatisfied	6	6.2%	25	10.6%
Satisfied	40	41.2%	114	48.6%
Very satisfied	28	28.9%	54	22.9%
No basis for opinion	23	23.7%	36	15.3%
	97		236	

(12b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of persistence?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	2	2.1%	9	2.8%
Dissatisfied	9	9.3%	27	11.4%
Satisfied	37	38.1%	107	45.3%
Very satisfied	25	25.8%	49	20.8%
No basis for opinion	24	24.7%	44	18.6%
	97		236	

TABLES 11-18 CONT.

(Male)

(13a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of awareness?

	New		Recurning	
Very dissatisfied	2	4.9%	2	1.7%
Dissatisfied	3	7.3%	15	12.9%
Satisfied	23	56.1%	59	50.9%
Very satisfied	4	9.8%	29	25.0%
No basis for opinion	9	22.0%	11	9.5%
	41		116	

(14a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of scholarship?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	3	7.3%	4	3.4%
Dissatisfied	6	14.6%	25	21.6%
Satisfied	17	41.5%	56	48.3%
Very satisfied	5	12.2%	15	12.9%
No basis for opinion	10	24.4%	16	13.8%
	41		116	

(Female)

(13b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of awareness?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	-	-	8	3.4%
Dissatisfied	8	8.2%	20	8.5%
Satisfied	42	43.3%	123	52.1%
Very satisfied	25	25.8%	41	17.4%
No basis for opinion	22	22.7%	44	18.6%
	97		236	

(14b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of scholarship?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	1	1.0%	9	3.8%
Dissatisfied	15	15.5%	22	9.3%
Satisfied	30	30.9%	90	38.1%
Very satisfied	14	14.4%	35	14.8%
No basis for opinion	37	38.1%	80	33.9%
	97		236	

TABLES 11-18 CONT.

(Male)

(15a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to set priorities?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	2	4.9%	3	2.6%
Dissatisfied	5	12.2%	19	16.4%
Satisfied	20	48.8%	61	52.6%
Very satisfied	4	9.8%	20	17.2%
No basis for opinion	10	24.4%	13	11.2%
	41		116	

(16a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to study?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	2	4.9%	3	2.6%
Dissatisfied	6	14.6%	24	20.7%
Satisfied	22	53.7%	59	50.9%
Very satisfied	5	12.2%	20	17.2%
No basis for opinion	6	14.6%	10	8.6%
	41	116		

(Female)

(15b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to set priorities?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	1	1.0%	11	4.6%
Dissatisfied	12	12.4%	26	11.0%
Satisfied	35	36.1%	110	46.6%
Very satisfied	20	20.6%	31	13.1%
No basis for opinion	29	29.9%	58	24.6%
	97		236	

(16b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to study?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	2	2.1%	10	9.2%
Dissatisfied	12	12.4%	37	15.7%
Satisfied	38	39.2%	110	46.6%
Very satisfied	24	24.7%	43	18.2%
No basis for opinion	21	21.6%	36	15.3%
	97		236	

TABLES 11-18 CONT.

(Male)

(17a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to meet college deadlines?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	2	4.9%	3	2.6%
Dissatisfied	3	7.3%	20	17.2%
Satisfied	21	51.2%	61	52.6%
Very satisfied	6	14.6%	21	18.1%
No basis for opinion	9	22.0%	11	9.5%
	41		116	

(18a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to use time wisely?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	2	4.9%	3	2.6%
Dissatisfied	4	9.8%	20	17.2%
Satisfied	24	58.5%	61	52.6%
Very satisfied	3	7.3%	21	18.1%
No basis for opinion	8	19.5%	11	9.5%
	41		116	

(Female)

(17b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to meet college deadlines?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	-	-	10	4.2%
Dissatisfied	14	14.4%	37	15.7%
Satisfied	38	39.2%	110	46.6%
Very satisfied	23	23.7%	43	18.2%
No basis for opinion	22	22.7%	36	15.3%
	97		236	

(18b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to use time wisely?

	New		Returning	
Very dissatisfied	1	1.0%	8	3.4%
Dissatisfied	15	15.5%	35	14.8%
Satisfied	37	38.1%	107	45.3%
Very satisfied	23	23.7%	47	19.9%
No basis for opinion	21	21.6%	39	16.5%
	97		236	

DISCUSSION

In general, determining who will become an attrition statistic is very difficult for at least two reasons: (1) All students who do not return to college cannot be lumped together and studied as if they were one group; they differ just as persisting students differ in ability, motivation, need, etc.; (2) How attrition is defined pretty much determines the outcome. For example, two researchers working independently with the same population would, in all probability, report two different figures and both could be correct.

There is enough evidence from the literature on attrition, and this study certainly underscores the fact, to warrant using a combination of variables in developing predictive equations. That list, according to Madan Capoor of the City University of New York should include measures on personality, academic ability, educational aspiration, academic motivation; background information consisting of sex, ethnicity, religion, parents' education and occupation, family income, student's financial situation, his or her curriculum.

A final point should be stressed and that is the seemingly national preoccupation with developing predictive equations in attrition research should not be construed to suggest that they will be used to screen-out potential students. In fact, as past research has shown, the accuracy of prediction achieved in one's original sample, which decreases

appreciably when predicting to a different sample, has been so low that no serious effort has been made to use attrition research for that purpose. The idea is to use them for just the opposite purpose; to identify potential dropouts and intervene with appropriate services before they actually drop out of college.

Though this study did not attempt to answer specific questions about why students at Essex County College drop out, it is safe to say that the "dropout-process" among our students does not differ significantly from that reported nationally. Astin reports that the most "dropout-prone" freshmen are those with poor academic records in high school, low aspirations, poor study habits, relatively uneducated parents, small town background, being older than most freshmen (national norms), and, among freshmen women, being married or contemplating marriage. By far, the greatest predictive factor is the student's past academic record and academic ability.

IMPLICATIONS

Dr. Hayes of the Community College Complex of Pittsburgh suggests that two-year colleges have fared badly at the hands of researchers who compare their college attrition with that of four-year colleges and universities. The basic problem is the tendency of many to look at the community college from a traditional university perspective. To attach implications of educational effectiveness to

community college attrition rates based on traditional attrition standards is both misleading and unfair.

The nature of the community college itself, the breadth of its educational mission, its variety of goals, both institutional and individual, compound any such simplistic or restrictive approach. Therefore, any attempt to measure the phenomenon "attrition" in the community college must include a consideration of the objectives and offerings of the college itself as a unique phenomenon in higher education. The distinctive profile of each individual college, th numbers and kinds of programs it offers and the proportions of students enrolled in those programs are of major importance in any attrition data.

In reference to the observations made by Dr. Hayes, a few comments about Essex seem appropriate. For instance, repeated observations over the past three years have shown that students new to the college do not come to the classroom prepared to be motivated in the traditional manner; they are motivated well before we register them. Unfortunately, many of them do not have the skills necessary to achieve at a level comparable to that motivation. Why this schism exists is debatable: Some blame the public schools; a few criticize the college for not being able to correct the inadequacy; fewer still believe the student himself or herself is at fault. Whether one considers the problem from an individual or institutional point of view, the real

issue is not so much who is responsible as it is what is to be done about it.

If it is safe to generalize from the data available, one might also hypothesize that the student new to the college functions at an external rather than at an internal level of reinforcement control. That is, many students relate to the academic environment as if their success or failure occurs independently of their own efforts - they do not feel they are in control of their own fate.

We know that most of our students are influenced more by vocational considerations than they are by the traditional intellectual interests, and that fact has been verified by previous research. In terms of curriculum, the typical student chooses a major in human services which is consistent with the long-range goals to "be helpful to others" and "work with people" often reported during initial testing.

Perhaps most revealing of all, we know from a report by the Council of County Colleges that Essex ranked second among New Jersey State Two-Year Colleges for the number of associate degrees conferred for the same three-year period; and, for total students who transferred (graduates and non-graduates) for the 1972-73 year, Essex ranked number one.

A questionable assumption, at least for two-year colleges, is that attrition per se is necessarily negative. It is true that a 40 or 50 percent rate would appear to represent a real loss to the student,

the institution and to society; but it is equally true that for some students, withdrawal/dropout/stopout is a positive move both for the student and for the institution. That not every student can find fulfillment through higher education is a reality often overlooked by both educators and the community. For a few, those who persist in college even though the experience brings very little reward, a kind of attrition is taking place that is invisible yet nevertheless real.

TABLES 11-18

ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDINAL VARIABLES

FOR OFFICIAL WITHDRAWALS

(Male)

(11a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of motivation?

Very dissatisfied	4	5.0%
Dissatisfied	5	6.3%
Satisfied	37	46.3%
Very satisfied	11	13.8%
No basis for opinion	23	28.8%
	80	

(12a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of persistence?

Very dissatisfied	5	6.3%
Dissatisfied	9	11.3%
Satisfied	29	36.3%
Very satisfied	12	15.0%
No basis for opinion	25	31.3%
	80	

(Female)

(11b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of motivation?

Very dissatisfied	8	6.2%
Dissatisfied	12	9.3%
Satisfied	54	41.9%
Very satisfied	13	10.1%
No basis for opinion	42	32.6%
	129	

(12b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of persistence?

Very dissatisfied	3	2.3%
Dissatisfied	13	10.1%
Satisfied	56	43.4%
Very satisfied	13	10.1%
No basis for opinion	44	34.1%
	129	

TABLES 11 TO 20A

(Male)

(13a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of awareness?

Very dissatisfied	1	1.3%
Dissatisfied	10	12.5%
Satisfied	31	38.8%
Very satisfied	13	16.3%
No basis for opinion	25	31.3%
	80	

(14a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your level of scholarship?

Very dissatisfied	5	6.3%
Dissatisfied	8	10.0%
Satisfied	24	30.0%
Very satisfied	11	13.8%
No basis for opinion	32	40.0%
	80	

(Female)

(13b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied wit your level of awareness?

Very dissatisfied	1	.8%
Dissatisfied	15	11.6%
Satisfied	52	40.3%
Very satisfied	17	13.2%
No basis for opinion	44	34.1%
	129	

(14b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied wit your level of scholarship?

Very dissatisfied	3	2.3%
Dissatisfied	19	14.7%
Satisfied	34	26.4%
Very satisfied	12	9.3%
No basis for opinion	61	47.3%
	129	

TABLES 11-18 CONT.

(Male)

(15a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to set priorities?

Very dissatisfied	3	3.8%
Dissatisfied	10	12.5%
Satisfied	32	40.0%
Very satisfied	8	10.0%
No basis for opinion	27	33.8%
	80	

(16a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to study?

Very dissatisfied	3	3.8%
Dissatisfied	11	13.8%
Satisfied	36	45.0%
Very satisfied	8	10.0%
No basis for opinion	22	27.5%
	80	

(Female)

(15b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to set priorities?

Very dissatisfied	5	3.9%
Dissatisfied	16	12.4%
Satisfied	43	33.3%
Very satisfied	14	10.9%
No basis for opinion	51	39.5%
	129	

(16b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to study?

Very dissatisfied	7	5.4%
Dissatisfied	18	14.0%
Satisfied	54	41.9%
Very satisfied	14	10.9%
No basis for opinion	36	27.9%
	129	

TABLES 11-18 CONT.

(Male)

(17a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to meet college deadlines?

Very dissatisfied	5	6.3%
Dissatisfied	7	8.8%
Satisfied	34	42.5%
Very satisfied	7	8.8%
No basis for opinion	27	33.8%
	80	

(18a) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to use time wisely?

Very dissatisfied	4	5.0%
Dissatisfied	13	16.3%
Satisfied	31	38.8%
Very satisfied	8	10.0%
No basis for opinion	24	30.0%
	80	

(Female)

(17b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to meet college deadlines?

Very dissatisfied	5	3.9%
Dissatisfied	15	11.6%
Satisfied	48	37.2%
Very satisfied	22	17.1%
No basis for opinion	39	30.2%
	129	

(18b) To what extent were you satisfied/dissatisfied with your ability to use time wisely?

Very dissatisfied	6	4.7%
Dissatisfied	15	11.6%
Satisfied	50	38.8%
Very satisfied	17	13.2%
No basis for opinion	41	31.8%
	129	

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